

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

REPORT

CD NO.

FOREIGN DOCUMENTS OR RADIO BROADCASTS

DATE OF INFORMATION 1949

DATE DIST. 13 Dec 1949

NO. OF PAGES 2

SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

LANGUAGE Swedish

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS INFORMATION AFFECTING THE NATIONAL DEFENSE
OF THE UNITED STATES WITHIN THE MEANING OF ESPIONAGE ACT 50
U. S. C. 31 AND 32, AS AMENDED. ITS TRANSMISSION OR THE REVELATION
OF ITS CONTENTS IN ANY MANNER TO AN UNAUTHORIZED PERSON IS PRO-
HIBITED BY LAW. REPRODUCTION OF THIS FORM IS PROHIBITED

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE Dagens Nyheter, No 318, 1949.

SAYS USSF CONVERTING VALONA
INTO ADRIATIC GIBRALTAR

The Strait of Otranto in the southern part of the Adriatic Sea has begun to attract the attention of the world press since information has been published that the Russians are secretly establishing a naval base there. Whoever dominates the Strait of Otranto can use it to stage sorties against the Mediterranean Sea, and it is by virtue of this fact that the channel gains its importance in the strategic picture.

Only a single area on the Mediterranean still remains open to Russian influence, namely Albania, which possesses a 300-kilometer-long coastline on the Adriatic Sea.

On the Albanian coast, across from Otranto on the Italian side, is Valona Bay with the city of Valona, and directly off Valona is the small island of Saseno. In 1920 Saseno came into Italian possession, but in 1945 it was occupied by Albanian guerrilla detachments and in the peace treaty of 1947 was turned over formally to the Albanians. The island itself is only a few square kilometers in area and rises to a height of 300 meters above the sea. Now the Western powers are casting suspicious glances toward this rocky island and the bay behind it, having become even more convinced that the Soviet Union is establishing a submarine base in that area, threatening vital lines of communication through the Mediterranean.

According to US reports, the establishment of a submarine base in Valona Bay was begun in the summer of 1948, approximately at the time Tito broke with Stalin, nullifying Russian intentions to establish themselves on the Yugoslav coast. Ideal geographic conditions facilitate the establishment and defense of the base. The island itself is richly provided with tunnels and underground chambers, dating from the days of Italian ownership, where coast artillery and torpedo batteries may readily be placed.

Artillery batteries, rocket batteries, and radar stations have been placed in the chain of hills around Valona Bay. Several airfields are to have been provided with underground hangars and fuel dumps. Pens for vessels are reported to have

- 1 -

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

STATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NAVY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NARB		DISTRIBUTION			
ARMY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	AIR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	FBI					

STAT

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

been blasted into the high cliffs at the innermost part of Valona Bay. These pens accommodate no less than 50 submarines. Platforms with batteries of rockets and heavy-caliber automatic guns have been set up in adjacent marshlands for the close protection of the submarine pectoes.

All in all, judging from US reports, it seems that excellent natural conditions exist there for establishing a miniature Gibraltar; it is well protected against air attack and very inaccessible from the shore. The weak point of the base, from the Russian viewpoint, is perfectly obvious: it lacks communication with the shore and, unlike Gibraltar, cannot be supplied by water across an enemy-dominated sea in time of war. The matter of being able to secure a land connection to Albania, either through Yugoslavia or Greece, must, therefore, be a problem to which the Russians are devoting a great deal of attention, just as the Western powers must be greatly concerned with throwing monkey wrenches into political developments in Albania in such a way that the establishment of a Russian base at Valona Bay will be squelched.

Against the background of the apparent Russian activity in Albania, one may regard the plans for the rebuilding of the Italian fleet as also one of interest in the Adriatic Sea. Under the terms of the peace treaty, the Italian fleet was limited to a total tonnage of 67,500 tons, and it was further stipulated that no battle-ships, carriers, submarines, or motor torpedo boats were to be built in the future. Moreover, no keels could be laid prior to 1 January 1950. As that date is now very close, the Italian Senate has approved the expansion of the fleet to include a number of new vessels, including one cruiser, six large destroyers, two antisircraft vessels, a group of fast gunboats, and a number of smaller vessels. Two light cruisers, built in 1936 and of the same size as the new Swedish cruisers, are to be modernized. British naval and air forces recently conducted large-scale maneuvers in the vicinity of the Strait of Otranto, from which one may presume that this strategically important strait has been the object of especially thorough study.

- E N D -

RESTRICTED

- 2 -

RESTRICTED